

Critical essay

Animal Farm by George
Orwell

Read the questions carefully!

- ❖ Seems obvious, but make sure you look at the **second part of the question.**
- ❖ The first part is really just an indicator: “Choose a novel in which...”
- ❖ It is the second part which tells you what to do:
“Explain the nature of the conflict and then show how it helps our understanding of the novel as a whole.”
- ❖ Lots of people don't do well as they forget to answer the second part.

Make a plan

- ❖ When you have decided on your question, spend a few minutes making a plan.
- ❖ Write down what your main points should be (try to write at least 3). You will write a paragraph about each.
- ❖ Try to also write down your key quotes now. This will help when you come to writing the essay.
- ❖ The most logical (and the easiest) order, is the order of the novel. But it depends on your question. For example if the question asks about the ending.
- ❖ There is no one correct way to structure your essay. Just try to be logical about it. And try to link your points/ paragraphs

Referring to the question

Choose a play which explores **a theme** which you find interesting.

By referring to **appropriate techniques**, show how the writer explores this theme.

Introduction

Animal Farm is a novel by George Orwell. In this essay, I will show how theme is important throughout the play.

Compare this  with 

“Animal Farm” is a novel written by George Orwell. I will be analysing the theme of corruption of power by one of the main characters, Napoleon.

Referring to the question

Use the summary:

“Animal Farm” is set on a farm where the pigs control all the the other animals. The original name of the farm was Manor Farm and it was run by Mr Jones, but he did not do a good job of feeding and looking after the animals. So they came up with the idea of running the farm for themselves. At the start they made a list of rules about equality and respect, but a character, named Napoleon, had other ideas and soon was planning to become their brutal leader.

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“Animal Farm” is set on a farm where the pigs control all the the other animals. The original name of the farm was Manor Farm and it was run by Mr Jones, but he did not do a good job of feeding and looking after the animals. So they came up with the idea of running the farm for themselves. **At the start they made a list of rules about equality and respect, but a character, named Napoleon, had other ideas and soon was planning to become their brutal leader.**

Referring to the question

Main paragraph:

This is ok:

Napoleon takes 9 puppies away from their mother, saying he is going to make them “responsible for their education”. However, Napoleon had been training them to vicious killers. In one scene, some pigs “confessed” to be in allegiance with Snowball and they meet their untimely demise when Napoleon orders the dogs to “rip their throats out”, in a gruelling death. He does this in front of all the other animals as a warning of sorts. Throughout the rest of the novel, Napoleon uses the threat of death to anyone working with Snowball.

Refer to the question. Main paragraph

But this is better:

Napoleon shows signs of being very power-hungry. He takes 9 puppies away from their mother, saying he is going to make them “responsible for their education”. However, Napoleon had been training them to vicious killers. In one scene, some pigs “confessed” to be in allegiance with Snowball and they meet their untimely demise when Napoleon orders the dogs to “rip their throats out”, in a gruelling death. He does this in front of all the other animals as a warning of sorts. Throughout the rest of the novel, Napoleon uses the threat of death to anyone working with Snowball. **This alone shows that Napoleon is a controlling and corrupt leader, threatening to kill anyone who dares challenge him.**

Analysis

Many of you are still doing too much retelling of the story:

Throughout the first half of the book we see Napoleon and Snowball both want to be the leader, but one day when Snowball is talking to the other animals about the windmill, Napoleon brings out the dogs he had trained. Everyone had forgotten about them as Napoleon took them away when they were just puppies, but now they are acting like his guard dogs. He makes the dogs chase Snowball off the farm and he never comes back.

Analysis

A good example of analysis:

As the novel progresses, we see Snowball and Napoleon both trying to be the leader of the animals. We are told that they “disagreed at every point where disagreement was possible.” This tells us how much they are in conflict with each other and they are clear rivals. The main source of their conflict was over the building of the windmill. During a public meeting, where Snowball was trying to sell the idea to the other animals, Napoleon clearly saw he was losing votes and he has Snowball chased off the farm by “nine enormous dogs”, which left the other animals “silent and terrified”. This shows that Napoleon would do anything to be in control and was prepared to get rid of anyone that stood in his way.

Evaluation

This paragraph is linked to the question and contains analysis:

As the novel progresses, we see Snowball and Napoleon both trying to be the leader of the animals. We are told that they “disagreed at every point where disagreement was possible.” This tells us how much they are in conflict with each other and they are clear rivals. The main source of their conflict was over the building of the windmill. During a public meeting, where Snowball was trying to sell the idea to the other animals, Napoleon clearly saw he was losing votes and he has Snowball chased off the farm by “nine enormous dogs”. This shows that Napoleon would do anything to be in control and was prepared to get rid of anyone that stood in his way, which left the other animals “silent and terrified”.

But how can we include **evaluation** (readers’ response)?

Evaluation

As the novel progresses, we see Snowball and Napoleon both trying to be the leader of the animals. We are told that they “disagreed at every point where disagreement was possible.” This tells us how much they are in conflict with each other and they are clear rivals. The main source of their conflict was over the building of the windmill. During a public meeting, where Snowball was trying to sell the idea to the other animals, Napoleon clearly saw he was losing votes and he has Snowball chased off the farm by “nine enormous dogs”. This shows that Napoleon would do anything to be in control and was prepared to get rid of anyone that stood in his way, which left the other animals, “silent and terrified”. At this point in the novel, the reader is left feeling saddened for the other animals on the farm as they (and indeed we) believed in the dream of equality, but it becoming apparent that Napoleon is a ruthless tyrant, who cares only about his own power.

Critical terminology

The question also asks you to identify/ discuss the writer's techniques. Some of you write about the novel as if it was real. But it has been created by a skillful writer. To get a really good mark, you must show an awareness of the writer's skills.

Look at the top of the paper. There is a box that asks you to:

Answers to questions on Prose, should refer to the text and to such relevant features such as characterisation, setting, language, key incident(s), climax, structure, theme, plot, setting...

Critical terminology

So rather than saying:

As the novel progresses, we see Snowball and Napoleon both trying to be the leader of the other animals.

Say something like:

As the novel progresses, Orwell makes effective use of characterisation. We the different characters of Snowball and Napoleon as they both try to be the leader of the animals.

(You could go on then to give a quote for each character to show the contrast between them.)

Technical accuracy

It's Animal Farm! With a capital letter!

It's Napoleon! With a capital letter!

George Orwell!

Boxer!